December 5, 1963

The Chief Justice
The Supreme Court
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Chief Justice:

At the direction of President Johnson, I am transmitting herewith to you and to the other members of the Commission copies of the report of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the assassination of President Kennedy and on the subsequent shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald. You will note that in some aspects the investigation is continuing and further information will be made available to the Commission as it develops. The Secret Service and the Department of State have also prepared reports with respect to the preparations made to guard the President and certain background information in the hands of the State Department with respect to Oswald. You will have these promptly.

This report is not a classified document since it does not contain defense information. However, we have been treating it as a highly classified document and I trust that you and the other members of the Commission will do likewise until such time as you determine to release matters contained within it. Within the Government it is being read by a very limited number of people on a "need to know" basis.

You will recall that at the time of announcing the Federal Bureau of Investigation investigation, and prior to the appointment of the Commission, President Johnson announced that the FBI report would be made public. I have,

however, informed him of your request that this report not be released until the Commission has had time to review all of the facts and evaluate them. At the same time I am sure you are aware that there is much public speculation and rumor in this connection which would be desirable to allay as quickly as possible. For example, the latest Gallup poll shows that over half the American people believe that Oswald acted as part of a conspiracy in shooting President Kennedy, and there is considerable rumor in this country and abroad to the effect that Ruby acted as part of the same or a related conspiracy.

I think, therefore, the Commission should consider releasing--or allowing the Department of Justice to release--a short press statement which would briefly make the following points:

(1) The FBI report through scientific examination of evidence, testimony and intensive investigation, establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Lee Harvey Oswald shot President Kennedy on November 22, 1963. The evidence includes ballistic tests, fingerprints and palm prints, clothing fibers and other technical data which places Oswald at the scene of the crime and establishes that he fired the shots which killed President Kennedy and wounded Governor Connally of Texas.

(2) The FBI has made an exhaustive investigation into whether Oswald may have conspired with or been assisted by any organization, group or person, foreign or domestic, in carrying out this dastardly act. In this regard, the FBI has questioned hundreds of persons and checked out numerous rumors and reports. To date this aspect of the investigation has been negative. No evidence has been uncovered indicating that any organization, group or person, including Dallas night club owner, Jack Ruby, was involved with Oswald in the assassination of President Kennedy, or that the subsequent shooting of Oswald was part of a conspiracy.

I would be happy to discuss any of the matters contained in this letter or in the report with you or other members of the Commission at any time you should desire. I am, of course, always at your service.

Sincerely yours,

Nicholas deB. Katzenbach

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Deputy Attorney General